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ROAD PAVING EQUIPMENT TIRE TRACK REMOVER

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CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present application claims the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application, Ser. No. 60/463,451, filed 04/15/2003 (April 15, 2003).

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

[0002] Not applicable.

REFERENCE TO A MICROFICHE APPENDIX

[0003] Not applicable.

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] The present invention relates generally to road paving equipment, more particularly to a road paving equipment tire track remover.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION OF RELATED ART

5 [0002] It is known to attach blades to vehicles for earth and snow removal, conditioning, and
shaping operations. Typically, the blade comprises a concave blade body, customarily
denominated the moldboard, extending transversely or slightly angled across the direction of
vehicle travel. The blade is attached to the body or frame of a vehicle and is disposed in front of,
underneath, or behind the vehicle, where it engages and digs into the surface worked on to move
the surface substrate in a desired direction. Most often, the blade is fabricated of steel or other
10 relatively hard material so that it is not damaged by rocks, wood, artifacts and man made debris,
and various objects routinely found on the ground or in a road bed. When used for plowing or
scraping, the blade is capable of leaving a substantially smooth surface. Examples of such
apparatus may be found in, for example, U.S. Pat. No. 4,521,980 to Solaja, issued June 11, 1985,
which discloses an attachment for a loader wherein the loader can additionally perform the
15 function of a grader. The attachment comprises an elongated body member, a lateral slot in the
body member for engagement with a bucket of a loader, and a blade extending laterally of the
body member.

20 [0003] U.S. Pat. No. 5,775,012 to Hockensmith, issued July 7, 1998, teaches a hitch adjustable
rear blade hitched to the back of a tractor for earth grading operations. The blade has an
elongated cylindrical skid releasably mounted to the back of the blade adjacent the leading edge
of the blade and a pair of spaced apart stabilizer springs adjustably mounted to the front of the
blade holding the blade in tension.

[0004] U.S. Pat. No. 5,265,975 to Scott, issued November 30, 1993, shows a combination scarifier/grading device comprising a scarifier having a plurality of scarifying teeth, a grading blade having a mold board and a cutting edge, and a second frame interconnecting the scarifier frame and the blade in mutually spaced apart relation with the scarifier in operably leading relation and the blade in operably trailing relation. The scarifier includes height-adjusting means for selectively raising and lowering the scarifying teeth relative to the cutting edge. The height-adjusting means comprises an at least one hydraulic cylinder.

[0005] On a much larger scale, graders prepare road surfaces to grade. However, graders leave tire tracks in gravel and new asphalt, so it is also well known to employ rakes to smooth and level tire tracks made by road construction equipment on gravel and asphalt surfaces. The blades discussed immediately above are not well-suited for this task, so it invariably falls on road crews to do the work manually. Most disturbingly, because of the nature of the work, road crew assigned to the task of raking track marks typically ride on the rear of the grader, both during operations in the field and while traveling to and from the work site. This is dangerous and, less obviously, needlessly labor intensive and expensive: needlessly because an automated rake would eliminate the need for (typically) two manual laborers.

[0006] The foregoing patents reflect the current state of the art of which the present inventor is aware. Reference to, and discussion of, these patents is intended to aid in discharging Applicant's acknowledged duty of candor in disclosing information that may be relevant to the examination of claims to the present invention. However, it is respectfully submitted that none of the above-indicated patents disclose, teach, suggest, show, or otherwise render obvious, either singly or

when considered in combination, the invention described and claimed herein.

[0007] Accordingly, it remains desirable to provide an inexpensive and simple method and apparatus for mechanically raking and smoothing grader or other vehicle tire tracks created during road grading operations.

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OBJECTS AND ADVANTAGES

[0008] To address the above-described need, it is an object of the road paving equipment tire track remover of the present invention to provide an inexpensive tool that eliminates the need for manual raking and smoothing of tire tracks caused by road-making equipment during paving and road surface preparation operations.

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[0009] It is another object of the present invention to provide a tire track remover that has means for adjusting the downward pressure exerted by the tool when in use.

[0010] It is yet another object of the present invention to provide a tire track remover that can be quickly and easily coupled to a hydraulically-actuated attachment assembly.

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[0011] It is still another object of the present invention to provide a tire track remover that has few moving parts and lends itself to easy repair and maintenance.

[0012] It is a further object of the present invention to provide a tire track remover that includes a scraper blade that will conform to road surface changes and accommodate reasonable and acceptable variations in road surface unevenness by bending and/or moving reciprocally upward and downward as variations are encountered.

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[0013] Other novel features which are characteristic of the invention, as to organization and

method of operation, together with further objects and advantages thereof will be better understood from the following description considered in connection with the accompanying drawings, in which preferred embodiments of the invention are illustrated by way of example. It is to be expressly understood, however, that the drawings are for illustration and description only and are not intended as a definition of the limits of the invention. The various features of novelty that characterize the invention are pointed out with particularity in the claims annexed to and forming part of this disclosure. The invention does not reside in any one of these features taken alone, but rather in the particular combination of all of its structures for the functions specified.

[0014] There has thus been broadly outlined the more important features of the invention in order that the brief summary of the invention and the detailed description thereof that follows may be better understood, and in order that the present contribution to the art may be better appreciated. There are, of course, additional features of the invention that will be described hereinafter and which will form additional subject matter of the claims appended hereto. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the conception upon which this disclosure is based readily may be utilized as a basis for the designing of other structures, methods and systems for carrying out the several purposes of the present invention. It is important, therefore, that the claims be regarded as including such equivalent constructions insofar as they do not depart from the spirit and scope of the present invention.

[0015] Further, the purpose of the Abstract is to enable the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and the public generally, and especially the scientists, engineers and practitioners in the art who are not familiar with patent or legal terms or phraseology, to determine quickly from a cursory

inspection the nature and essence of the technical disclosure of the application. The Abstract is neither intended to define the invention of this application, which is measured by the claims, nor is it intended to be limiting as to the scope of the invention in any way.

[0016] Certain terminology and derivations thereof may be used in the following description

5 for convenience in reference only, and will not be limiting. For example, words such as "upward," "downward," "left," and "right" would refer to directions in the drawings to which reference is made unless otherwise stated. Similarly, words such as "inward" and "outward" would refer to directions toward and away from, respectively, the geometric center of a device or area and designated parts thereof. References in the singular tense include the plural, and vice
10 versa, unless otherwise noted.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0017] The present invention is a road paving equipment tire track remover comprising a pair of blade assemblies positioned immediately behind the rear wheels of a grader on a ripper frame.

15 Each of the blade assemblies includes a semi-flexible blade attached to a V-shaped frame. The blade assemblies are attached to the ripper frame with a expansible scissors assembly which allows vertical movement of the blade during operations. The blade itself is swivellingly connected to a strut depending downwardly from the scissors assembly and terminating in a post having an arcuate throughhole through which a bolt passes. This allows for side-to-side rocking
20 movement of each side of the blade. The post is then connected to a box having an opening for the placement of plank-shaped weights to vary downward pressure exerted by the blade onto the

road surface.

[0018] The blade is semi-flexible, preferably fabricated from rigid rubber material which has some play in both the longitudinal and vertical directions. Play in the vertical direction is provided by parallel bar expanding mechanism (akin to a scissors gate or lazy tongs), which is, in turn, welded or otherwise attached to a hydraulically-actuated ripper bar or frame. When the ripper frame is lowered so that the lower edge of the blade engages the road surface, the parallel bars pivot to allow some give from the blade, depending on the amount of weight selectively placed in the blade's weight box. Play at the edges is governed by side-to-side movement of the blade as allowed by the pivot point defined by the arcuate slot in the post. Collectively, these features allow careful tailoring of blade movement and behavior during operations. Specifically, according to the paving material employed, they permit the blade to maintain a controllably small inventory of paving material in front of the blade and thus available for leveling out minor work surface irregularities and tire track marks as the blade passes over them. The play also permits excess substrate material collected on the blade and/or large objects to pass under the blade. Thus the blade will continue to fill tire tracks unless and until it is overloaded with material or engages an object too large to blend into the paving material, in which event it will be biased upwardly to allow the object or material to pass under the blade. Accordingly, its performance will not be adversely affected by material accumulation during operations.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

[0019] The invention will be better understood and objects other than those set forth above will

become apparent when consideration is given to the following detailed description thereof. Such description makes reference to the annexed drawing wherein:

[0020] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a grader having the paving equipment tire track remover of the present invention mounted on a hydraulically-actuated frame member at the rear of the grader;

[0021] FIG. 2 is a perspective view showing the inventive apparatus in isolation;

[0022] FIG. 3 is a top view of the apparatus of FIG. 2;

[0023] FIG. 4A is cross-sectional side view in elevation thereof, showing the attachment assembly scissors gate in a slightly retracted configuration, said section taken along the section lines defined in FIG. 3;

[0024] FIG. 4B is a cross-sectional side view in elevation thereof, showing the attachment assembly scissors gate in a fully extended configuration, said section also taken along the section lines defined in FIG. 3; and

[0025] FIG. 5 is a rear view in elevation of the inventive apparatus mounted on a grader ripper frame with the frame lowered into position so that the blades engage the paving surface.

[0026] Drawing Legend:

10	inventive apparatus generally
100	ripper frame
102	grader
104	hydraulic piston
106a-b	first and second blade assemblies
108	semi-flexible blade
108a	horizontal axis of semi-flexible blade

	108b	vertical axis of semi-flexible blade
	108c	center of horizontal axis
	110	upper edge of semi-flexible blade
	112	V-shaped blade frame
5	114	concave rear side of semi-flexible blade
	115	front side of semi-flexible blade
	116	lower edge of semi-flexible blade
	118	parallel scissors assembly
	120	strut member
10	122	triangular post
	124	throughhole
	126	attachment means
	128	box
	130	upper opening in box
15	131	handles for blocks
	132	weights or blocks
	133	locking pins
	134	road surface
	135a-b	apertures
20	136	longitudinal strut

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0027] Referring to FIGS. 1 through 5, wherein like reference numerals refer to like components in the various views, there is illustrated therein a new and improved road paving equipment tire track remover, generally denominated 10 herein.

[0028] FIGS. 1 and 5 show that the inventive apparatus 10 is adapted for mounting proximate

the rear wheels of road paving equipment. For example, the apparatus may be mounted on a
ripper frame 100 of a grader 102. The ripper frame, or other suitable attachment surface, is
preferably hydraulically-actuated by at least one driver-controlled hydraulic piston 104, though
manual functioning is disadvantageous only in the ease of use. The tire track remover comprises
5 at least one blade assembly, preferably first and second blade assemblies 106a, 106b, each of
which includes a semi-flexible blade 108 captured or otherwise attached at its upper edge 110 to
a V-shaped blade frame 112. In operation and during forward movement of the road paving
vehicle, the rear side 114 of the blade is urged into an arc and is therefore concave relative to its
horizontal axis 108a, the degree of concavity depending upon the pressure exerted upon the
10 lower edge 116 of the blade. The shape of front side 115 of blade 108 generally conforms to the
V-shaped frame 112 to which the blade's upper edge is affixed, and it is concave relative to the
blade's vertical axis 108b, which is substantially perpendicular to the center 108c of the
horizontal axis of the blade. This creates a generally symmetrical leading side such that road
paving material is collected and urged to the center of the blade in a generally balanced manner
15 as the paving vehicle moves forward.

[0029] FIGS. 2 through 4B provide more detailed views of the inventive apparatus, collectively
showing that the tire track remover is attached to a ripper frame with a parallel scissors assembly
118 which provides for vertical play or movement of the blade assemblies to conform to road
irregularities. Depending downwardly from the scissors assembly is at least one strut member
20 120 to which a truncated triangular post 122 having an arcuate throughhole 124 is pivotally
connected with a rivet, bolt, or other attachment means 126.

[0030] Post 122 is next connected to a box or trough 128 defining an upper opening 130 into which heavy blocks 132 of varying weights may be disposed to adjust the amount of downward pressure exerted onto the road surface 134 by the blade during operation. The blocks preferably include handles 131 which facilitate manipulation of the blocks. Additionally, locking pins 133 may be provided and inserted through coaxial apertures 135a, 135b to secure blocks 132 in box 128. The V-shaped frames 112 at the upper edge 110 of the blade assemblies 118 is secured to the rear of the box with attachment means, preferably bolts or other hardware that allows for easy removal and replacement of the flexible blade portion 108.

[0031] Finally, a longitudinal strut 136 is interposed between the weight box 128 and the blade frame 112 so as to provide structural support and to define the degree of inward angle from the outside edges of the blade to the geometric center of the blade, and thus the rapidity with which material is channeled to the center of the blade. This, too, may be adjusted according to the paving material used in the paving operations.

[0032] As will be readily appreciated from the foregoing description, the paving equipment tire track remover of the present invention is dragged behind paving equipment during paving operations. The weight of the assembly, and any additional weight provided by the blocks placed in box 128, press the flexible blades into soft and movable paving material. To the extent that loose material is collected by the blades, it is partly swept into tire track depressions and partly accumulated in front of the moving blades. The shape of the blade channels material into the general location of the tire tracks, and the blade assemblies are positioned on the equipment to optimize this channeling effect according to the areas where tire tracks are formed.

[0033] The above disclosure is sufficient to enable one of ordinary skill in the art to practice the invention, and provides the best mode of practicing the invention presently contemplated by the inventor. While there is provided herein a full and complete disclosure of the preferred embodiments of this invention, it is not desired to limit the invention to the exact construction, dimensional relationships, and operation shown and described. Various modifications, alternative constructions, changes and equivalents will readily occur to those skilled in the art and may be employed, as suitable, without departing from the true spirit and scope of the invention. Such changes might involve alternative materials, components, structural arrangements, sizes, shapes, forms, functions, operational features or the like. In fact, and as will be appreciated by those with skill in the art, distilled to its essence, the present invention is a road paving vehicle track remover comprising at least one blade assembly having a semi-flexible blade with a lower edge and an upper edge, the upper edge being attached to a frame so as to create a concave front side of the blade. Means are provided for removably attaching the blade assembly to a road paving vehicle on a surface proximate the rear wheels of the vehicle such that the blade assembly is disposed downwardly and the lower edge of the blade comes into contact with the road surface. The assembly is provided with height adjustment means for adjusting the height of the blade assembly; and pressure adjustment means for adjusting the downward pressure exerted by the blade assembly on the road surface.

[0034] Therefore, the above description and illustrations should not be construed as limiting the scope of the invention, which is defined by the appended claims.